

**State Habitat Partnership Committee**  
**July 27, 2013**  
**Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Region 1 Office**  
**Pinetop, AZ – 9:00 AM**

**Present:**

Bob Birkeland, AGFD  
Reuben Teran, AGFD  
Brian Wakeling, AGFD,  
Commissioner Kurt Davis, AZ Game & Fish  
Commission  
Ruth Gregory, AGFD  
Commissioner J.W. Harris, AZ Game & Fish  
Commission  
Joe Currie, AGFD  
Jake Fousek, AGFD  
Dave Daniels, AGFD  
Carl Lutch, AGFD  
Steve Rosenstock, AGFD  
Scott Fischer, AGFD  
Kelly Wolfe-Krauter, AGFD  
Dave Laird, AGFD Volunteer  
Billy Masters, Springerville HPC

Glen Dickens, Arizona Antelope Foundation  
Steve Clark, Arizona Elk Society  
Stephen Williams, Forage Resource Study Group  
Chip Young, AGFD  
Dean Pokrajac, AGFD  
Denis Humphrey, AZ State Land Department  
Terry Herndon, Mule Deer Foundation  
Velma Holt-Buhr, AGFD  
Beth Humphrey, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest  
Tyler Richins, AGFD  
Duane Aubuchon, AGFD  
Anne Casey, Coronado National Forest  
Paul Greer, AGFD  
Evan Lautzenheiser, AGFD  
Paul Durbin, Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society

Commissioner J.W. Harris welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation, and announced that this is his last meeting as State Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) Chairman. He stated how much he appreciated the work of this committee and how much he enjoyed his time as Chair. He introduced the group to the new Chairman, Commissioner Kurt Davis, who expressed his desire to learn about the important work of this committee.

**Roll Call of HPCs:**

Springerville-Alpine – Billy Masters (new  
Chairman)  
Show Low – Bob Birkeland  
Winslow – Bob Birkeland  
Forage Resource Study Group – Stephen Williams  
Williams-Flagstaff – Steve Rosenstock  
Kingman – Velma Holt-Buhr

Prescott - Jake Fousek  
Southwest – Scott Fischer  
Tucson – Duane Aubuchon  
Safford – Duane Aubuchon  
Sierra Vista-Douglas – Glen Dickens  
Payson Nat. Resources Committee – Dave Daniels

The Southwest HPC will be working closely in coordination with the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club. The currently defunct Fredonia HPC is regrouping with a few interested groups who will come together to coordinate annually. There is no official name of the group, but it will probably be something on the order of the “Arizona

Strip Project Committee” and will consist of AGFD, BLM, and other interested parties. Steve Rosenstock, the AGFD Region 2 Habitat Program Manager from the Flagstaff office has been making contacts and involving the regional habitat program in the Arizona Strip group.

**Agenda review:**

A request was made to add a Boquillas Ranch access update.

**Approval of minutes of the meeting of February 9, 2013:**

A motion was made, and seconded, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion carried.

**HPC Coordinator Updates:**

Out of Cycle projects:

- 1) 12-221: Raymond Wildlife Area Perimeter Fence Maintenance project is underway.
- 2) The Arizona Elk Society (AES) has submitted an out-of-cycle proposal for the continuation of the water hauling and wildlife water maintenance program initiated within Region 2. Last year AES hauled 65,000 gallons of water, and approximately 50,000 gallons so far this year. Through the use of their own banquet dollars, AES has purchased a truck and hired a contractor to work in coordination with volunteers and other groups to repair old water developments. Steve Clark provided an overview of the proposal, and the project was supported by the State HPC. Since special elk tag funds are requested for the proposal, this project will be coordinated with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation prior to final decisions on funding.
- 3) The proposal titled “Wildlife Connectivity Planning in the Sonoran Desert National Monument and White Tank Mountains was presented to the State HPC. The overall purpose of the project is to collect mountain lion movement data to help inform and identify critical landscape linkages, and to validate existing least-cost wildlife linkage designs. The funds requested for this proposal were for the purchase of NorthStar satellite based trap alarms that would be used to notify Department biologists when mountain lion traps are set off. These alarms minimize the time an animal is held in a trap, and greatly minimizes staff time and resources needed to check trap sites on a daily basis, especially when they are in very remote areas. Commissioner Harris asked about available lion tag dollars, and the proposed mountain lion research associated with in the Santa Catalina bighorn sheep restoration project. Brian explained that we used federal aid dollars to purchase bighorn sheep radio collars, and there should be special bighorn sheep tag funds available for this type of marking and monitoring, if necessary. The bighorn sheep tag funds are eligible for the project because the potential investigation would benefit our understanding of bighorn sheep ecological relationships. There was a motion and second to approve mountain lion special tag fund dollars to purchase the trap alarms for the project. The motion carried.

Arizona Wildlife Views TV Program:

It was announced that there will be an *Arizona Wildlife Views* segment on the Habitat Partnership Committee and Special Big Game License Tag fund programs in the near future. David Majure from the Department’s Information Branch has conducted interviews with staff and members of participating wildlife conservation

organizations, and has shot some footage of active HPC funded projects. He was present today to document some of the State HPC meeting process.

#### HPC Project Tracking Update:

Reuben has been coordinating with project proponents past and present to close the project cycle loop on HPC projects for which completion reports have not been submitted. Project completion reports are required, and are a vital part of the integrity of the HPC and Special Big Game License Tag fund programs. Information was requested for projects dating back to 2002, but the main focus was for projects from 2006 to present since expenditures for those projects are now available in the State Accounting system and can be tied back directly to the HPC project number.

In the upcoming 2013 HPC funding cycle, project proponents are hereby advised that their future projects are in jeopardy of not being funded if they've not submitted completion reports on previously funded projects. Brian stated that even if funded, if a proponent has outstanding reports, their requisitions for funding goods and services will not be signed until their reports are received. Commissioner Harris has been in agreement with this policy because of its importance to the integrity and accountability of the HPC program. The Bonita Grasslands Restoration Project was used as an example, whereas the HPC project completion report was also submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) as evidence of hard match for the NFWF grant.

#### EA Checklists and Cooperative Big Game Stewardship Agreements:

It was reiterated that EA Checklists and signed agreements MUST be completed and in place BEFORE work commences on any project. This means that project proponents may have to educate cooperators or constituents about the State Procurement process involved in the distribution of Special Big Game License Tag funds.

#### 2013 HPC Priorities:

Earlier this year Reuben coordinated with wildlife conservation organizations to review and update the [2013 HPC Priorities for Habitat Enhancement and Wildlife Management](#). This document is designed to provide a focused effort at seeking the types of projects for which the Department, wildlife conservation organizations, and other interested parties identify as priority needs, and are meant to be a guide for the development of HPC project proposals.

Glen Dickens stated that the Arizona Antelope Foundation's (AAF) board uses this document when deciding what projects to support for Special Tag funding.

Reuben stated that this document and other project planning resources can also be found on the [HPC Website](#).

Steve Clark mentioned that AES and AAF are available to assist with grant writing.

#### **Updates from the Arizona Game and Fish Department:**

##### Special Big Game License Tag Awards:

Reuben distributed a handout to the group listing which wildlife conservation groups were awarded Special Big Game License Tags at the Commission's June 2013 meeting. These are the groups that proponents should coordinate with during next year's funding cycle. Commissioner Harris mentioned to the wildlife conservation

groups that they should include a request in their application letters if they would be willing to accept any additional tags that have not been specifically requested. This allows the Commission to award tags for which there are few or no requests. Brian urged the groups to also do some coordination among themselves on requests as a way to simplify the awards and maximize the amount of money that can be raised. Commissioner Harris stated that the Commission looks at fundraising potential when considering which groups will be awarded special big game license tags.

#### License Fee Simplification:

Brian explained the proposed permit tag application fees were formulated based on cost of administering the draw process. Funds raised from these fees would be used for habitat and access. The rulemaking process is currently underway. Information on the Licensing Fee Simplification process can be found at: [http://www.azgfd.gov/eservices/licenses\\_newFees.shtml](http://www.azgfd.gov/eservices/licenses_newFees.shtml).

Commissioner Davis noted the value of recreational access and habitat preservation throughout the state. He envisions that a portion of the habitat dollars associated with the permit tag application fees may come to the HPC program. Bringing it to the HPC would give it oversight that will be accountable to the hunters. Many western states have a bonus point fee, but Arizona doesn't. Other discussions on this topic included expanding partnerships, fee caps, benefits and justifications of the need for increased revenue to cover increased costs.

#### Hunt Guidelines Process Update:

The Department is still taking comments through July 31, 2013. Comments can be sent through the Department's website at [http://www.azgfd.gov/h\\_f/hunt\\_guidelines.shtml](http://www.azgfd.gov/h_f/hunt_guidelines.shtml). A revised set of proposed guidelines will be presented to the Commission after this next round of public comments.

#### Big Game Survey Budget:

Brian explained the "PR bubble" which is an increase in funds from the federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Recreation program, funded by an excise tax on hunting equipment enacted by the Pittman Roberson Act of 1937. There will be more money for big game surveys this year and the amount available for next year's surveys will likely be similar to this year. The Department's Research Branch will be initiating a research project on elk survey methodology.

#### Game Translocations:

The Department is planning 4 bighorn sheep transplants, possibly 2 pronghorn transplants, and a possible exchange of Gould's turkeys for pronghorn from New Mexico, which the Commission must approve. Currently there is \$140,000 of special bighorn sheep tag funds allocated to the bighorn sheep translocation into the Santa Catalina Mountains in Region 5. Commissioner Harris gave a briefing on the Catalina Advisory Committee, which consists of diverse partners, including the Wilderness Society and the Center for Biological Diversity. The entire project will include predation management and prescribed fire. All the groups involved will be doing fundraising. There have been interesting discussions but the group is making progress. Planning is underway for moving sheep out of Clifton-Morenci to somewhere in Region 1, probably into South Fork. The 2013 blue grouse translocation effort took place in Region 2, but there was difficulty finding and trapping birds. There were no blue grouse caught this year but the translocation effort will be attempted again in 2014. It was suggested that the Wallow Fire area would be a good place to find source grouse.

Update on Water Development Designs:

Joe Currie gave a presentation on new trough and gutter designs that the Department will be using for future water development projects. The new designs are in response to the tank vendor who recently increased prices substantially for fiberglass tanks and were no longer able to be on State contract. The new design uses polyethylene instead of fiberglass. Joe fielded questions from the group about cost guidelines for project proposals, life expectancy, design features, and cost savings.

Addition to the Agenda - Boquillas Ranch Access Update:

As of today, there is no formal agreement between the Department and the Navajo Nation, and the lessee is going forward with the effort of limiting access points and charging an access fee. The good news is that the Boquillas Ranch will remain open. Access changes are effective August 15, 2013. The access fee will be \$60 per person, with some exceptions for youth or other special classes. The Department will have a role in educating the public about the ranch rules and may also be enforcing them in the future. Rules are posted at <http://huntbigboranch.com/>

**2-Year Review of the State HPC Charter:**

A motion was made and carried 2 years ago to review the charter about every 2-3 years to make sure it's up to date, and to provide the opportunity to make modifications as necessary. Reuben noted that a Local HPC Resource Management Plan Coordinator (Page 4 in LHPC section of the charter) has not yet been assigned or fully undertaken within all Local HPCs or Regions. Kelly Wolff-Krauter, the Department's Region 6 Habitat Program Manager introduced herself and Chip Young who is now the Landowner Relations person for Regions 4 and 6. She stated that in Region 6, the habitat program will be more involved in the HPC process and Chip will assist in coordinating the Local HPC Resource Management Plan duties for Regions 4 and 6. There are opportunities for AGFD staff to engage and assist in this role if they are interested. Reuben stated he will take comments on charter revisions through December 31, 2013, and will compile and share proposed revisions by end of January 2014. The State HPC can then review and ratify the updated charter at the February 2014 HPC meeting.

**Presentation: Landowner Relations Program Recreational Access Database:**

Dean Pokrajac, a GIS specialist from the Department's Landowner Relations office gave a presentation called "LRPin' from a GIS Perspective." It consisted of an overview of the Department's Recreational access Arizona web tool and a demonstration of how to navigate and customize the tool, and how the use of hand held devices (smart phones, iPad Tablets, GPS units, etc.) could eventually integrate real-time data collection and sharing capabilities.

**2012-2013 HPC Recognition Awards:**

The Williams Flagstaff HPC was recognized as the local HPC of the Year, and the Mule Deer Foundation was recognized as the Wildlife Conservation Organization of the Year. Commissioner Harris presented the plaques to Carl Lutch for the Williams Flagstaff HPC, and to Terry Herndon for the Mule Deer Foundation.

## **Local HPC and Nongovernmental Organizations Reports and Success Stories:**

### Winslow-Show Low:

Paul Greer reported that the Railroad Allotment PJ thinning project came in under budget and they were able to open up a pronghorn movement corridor. Deer, elk, and pronghorn will all benefit from this project. In the Rodeo-Chediski burn area, archaeological clearances are hanging up a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) grant in the Black Mesa Ranger District. This is a PAC grant from RMEF and will be re-submitted to the HPC for funding. Bob Birkeland reported that it involves tanks in Unit 4B. The Ranger District doesn't have archaeologists. Beth Humphrey reported that this is a forest-wide (Apache-Sitgreaves) problem, but they are trying to work this need into their budget prioritization. They do not want to lose funding for this project. Evan Lautzenheiser reported that the Black Mesa RD may be adding an archeologist this summer and hope to streamline the process. The Pink Cliffs water development is being coordinated with Development Branch who can order parts as soon as they get the tanks and troughs contracts are awarded. AAF has provided a wire roller and they have 13 volunteers who use it to remove old fencing. Volunteers did 1,100 hrs of work and hauled 40,000–50,000 of water. All their volunteers' hours are tracked.

### Southwest Arizona HPC:

The Southwest Arizona HPC may be merging with Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club (YVRGC). Scott Fischer reported that 2 water developments are due to begin this winter in his district, Mohawk Mountains and Sheep Mountain #2. Sheep Mountain #2 has moved up on the Region's priority list due to the need of aerial water hauling to keep it filled. YVRGC is taking ownership of the project in cooperation with the Department and will be memorializing the late Bob Achee. Bob was an AGFD Wildlife Area Manager who passed away recently. Catchment 432 in the Trigo Mountains is also scheduled. The catchment is located on the Yuma Proving Grounds. A note on access to the Yuma Proving Grounds – a volunteer recently got lost on the bombing range and was stuck in a wash for 3 days. YPG now requires an RSVP as well as an escort for volunteers entering the YPG. The YVRGC has helped with catchments in the past for pronghorn on the Barry Goldwater. The Department's Region 4 and YVRGC have collaborated on 75 projects since 1995.

### Sierra Vista-Douglas HPC and Arizona Antelope Foundation:

Glen Dickens – The Sierra Vista-Douglas HPC had to reschedule their last meeting due to storms that washed out a bridge. The AAF is participating in the AGFD-ADOT pronghorn connectivity project north of I-40, using \$15,000 of antelope tag funds for fence material purchases as well as volunteer project weekends - 2 per summer for 2013 and 2014. The next project is August 17, 2013 on Highway 89, 20 miles north of Flagstaff. AAF is also engaged with the Region 1 Big Lake pronghorn seasonal movement study, with animals due to be captured and collared on September 16. Region 5 completed its second year of 5 for the Bonita Grasslands project using antelope tag funds, as well as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant and a \$20,000 grant from the Arizona Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI). For the fawn enhancement project, coyote removal in Units 35A/B is being augmented by a \$5,000 donation from the SCI to the AAF and the AAF hired a contract trapper who removed 48 coyotes from private property in January-February 2013. SCI has committed another \$5,000 to the AAF in 2014 for the same effort. They have seen 88% fawn survival. The AAF Field Project Manager is working with the Wildlife Manager regarding Phase III of the Bonita Grasslands restoration project and AAF will be committing \$36,000 of NFWF grant funds to the project and will recommend the use of \$15,000 of 2013 HPC funding from the antelope tag fund as well. AAF is working with the Babocomari Ranch in Unit 35A and paid \$3,700 from its NFWF grant funds for a 371-acre burn of a sacaton bottom on March 13, significantly improving

connectivity and forage for pronghorn. In April 2013, AAF received an \$80,000 NFWF Youth and Conservation in the Outdoors national grant for its proposal "Youth and Conservation on the Las Cienegas National Grasslands." The 8-member crew, who range in age from 18-25, staffed through an agreement between the AAF and Southwestern Conservation Corps, have been on the job since June 10, 2013 modifying and removing critical range fences to permanently improve at least 20,000 acres of connectivity for pronghorn. They have also provided much needed Blacktailed Prairie Dog monitoring for the Department and a PhD wildlife student.

Arizona Elk Society:

Steve Clark reported that 60 AES volunteers turned out for the Ida Grassland Restoration project, lopping and scattering encroaching pine and juniper trees on over 250 acres. Fourteen AES volunteers became USFS-certified sawyers. This crew cut trees on over 60 acres clearing travel corridors for elk and antelope. There were 838 volunteer hours on the project, with a value of \$17,000 for federal match. The Buck Springs work project was a tremendous success with over 170 volunteers showing up to complete an amazing amount of work. Four miles of unnecessary fence were removed, and sawyers cut thousands of trees that volunteers stacked for burning. Two Eagle Scouts worked to restore proper creek channel flow to restore a riparian meadow. This is part of the newly developed Eagle Scout program, which now has a waiting list. This weekend netted \$60,000 worth of volunteer hours and mileage. At Burro Creek in Unit 1, 80 volunteers showed up for removing another 6 miles of fencing around riparian basins that will be rebuilt. Volunteers also repaired a log fence around springs for the 26 Bar Ranch. To date, AES volunteers have removed 70 miles of fence in 7 years. A 4-person crew also did a refurbishment of a concrete apron on Catchment 666. Several conservation groups are putting together a fundraising banquet in Prescott to raise money for the families of the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshots who died fighting the Yarnell Hill fire. So far attendance is expected to be 800 people and the groups have received many donations.

Springerville-Alpine HPC and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation:

Billy Masters reported that RMEF had funded several prescribed burns in the Rodeo-Chediski area, as well as pinyon-juniper removal in the Sponseller and Woolhouse allotment areas. The Forest Service has asked them to back off on funding burns for the time being because they can't keep up. Springerville-Alpine HPC participation is good.

Central Arizona Grasslands Conservation Strategy (CAGCS):

Kelly Wolff-Krauter reported that the project has been funded \$350,000 for on the ground work due to the "PR bubble." She handed out a map of the project areas and explained the strategy. So far, 26 projects have been identified in Regions 3 and 6 for grassland and habitat enhancements. Kelly also reported on the I-17 pronghorn telemetry research and crossings study that is also associated with juniper removal projects on the Prescott National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands in Unit 21. Pronghorn are using vegetation treatment areas, and treatments are continuing in Unit 21. Steve Clark mentioned that HPC projects and Special Tag funds could possibly be used as a match for these CAGCS grants.

Mule Deer Foundation (MDF):

Terry Herndon reported that 25 MDF and NWTF volunteers worked on the Powerline Tank project. MDF volunteers also worked with AAF on their projects in southern Arizona. They also donated \$800 to the Bar X Ranch in Kingman to bury a pipeline. They also helped out on the Shadow Mountain Ranch assisting with road clearing, and fence replacement on the Frye Mesa and Sycamore projects. They also worked on the Diamond Bar

Ranch in the Music Mountains. MDF is committed to helping ranchers who keep access open. NWTF and MDF have 2 wire rollers to lend out on fence projects.

Prescott HPC:

Jake Fousek stated that Darren Tucker is now the Field Supervisor for the Prescott district. Region 3 recently had a meeting with the Prescott National Forest (PNF) to discuss getting clearances for Department waters in the PNF. PNF applied and got partial funding for a burn this year. They spend most of their own money on Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) projects.

Payson Natural Resources Committee (PNRC):

Dave Daniels reported that in the PNRC area, 2,000 acres of juniper clearing have been completed and the Tonto National Forest has installed the bear-proof food lockers, which were funded through the HPC process. In August, they will be working with Mogollon Sporting Association to fix 8 guzzlers.

Forage Resource Study Group (FRSG):

Stephen Williams reported that Hopi 3 Canyons has a new manager, Pat Browning who replaces Duane Coleman. Denis Humphrey gave the winter-spring precipitation report, which FRSG monitors in 48 locations on the ranches. Precipitation for the period was about 3 inches, which is below average, however plant vigor is still good and forage is still of good quality. The Hopi 3 Canyons Ranch installed 60 miles of wildlife-friendly fencing, paid for with Natural Resource Conservation Service funding. Bar T Bar and Flying M Ranches have 3 EQIP water projects forthcoming. There are also plans for grassland restoration treatments on 34,000 acres of pinyon-juniper, a 5-year project. There will probably be an HPC project proposal to assist with funding, but other funding may get hung up depending on what happens with the Farm Bill. Carl Lutch reported that the Department's Development Branch completed a water improvement project on the Raymond Wildlife Area and the tanks are full. This will hopefully help to keep the bison from straying over to the neighbors. The repairs to the Raymond perimeter fence are underway and new fencing project proposals may be forthcoming. Carl thanked Denis and Stephen and Arizona State Land Department their assistance with the cultural clearances and required permits for the fence project.

New AGFD Landowner Relations Coordinator in Regions 4 and 6:

Chip Young introduced himself to the group and said he is looking forward to working in his new position, and working with the HPC as well.

Williams Flagstaff HPC:

Carl Lutch reported that the Coconino Sportsmen volunteers have continued their work on the Pat Springs Pipeline and that a grassland restoration project is underway on Babbitt Ranches. The effects of fall harvest turkey study is also ongoing with 49 transmitters are on the turkeys to date. A grassland mastication project is complete on the Ida Grassland in the Kaibab NF. Dog Knobs catchment will be redeveloped this November. There are other catchments in Unit 7 and Unit 9 that are priority waters in the Coconino NF to be rebuilt. The archaeological clearances are done, but they are just waiting on the completion of the NEPA process.

Kingman HPC:

Velma Holt-Buhr reported that 2 catchments in Unit 15A have been repaired and the Region has coordinated with Development Branch for another in the Music Mountains. The Mountain Shadows Ranch in Unit 16A project is



done and BLM donated a drinker that will be installed by Development Branch. The Region has been trying to reinvigorate the Kingman HPC with various stakeholders and interested parties.

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (A-S):

Beth Humphrey reported that the A-S will apply for some HPC funding, but the forest is running into a capacity issue due to 2 biologist position vacancies. Tyler Richins reported that the antelope study in Unit 1 will begin in September, deploying 9 GPS collars. The White Mountain Youth Conservation Corps has completed the 3 wetland exclosure fence projects funded last year by HPC funds.

Safford HPC:

Duane Aubuchon reported that the Government Peak Catchment in the Dos Cabezas is within a Wilderness Area and is an important project for the Safford HPC. BLM is having a hard time completing the environmental clearances. The solar well on The Nature Conservancy property, Sierra Blanca Well, is done; a completion report is forthcoming. Last year the HPC funded burns in the North Rim Aravaipa Canyon and the south Galiuro Mountains, but now they are waiting for a burn window. The small water project at Jackson Cabin will be complete soon. Mesquite grubbing at the Bonita Grassland will take place soon, also in the north Sulphur Springs Valley. In Unit 31 there is an access issue with the 76 Ranch. Proposals for wells and pipelines to benefit pronghorn and mule deer will be submitted. The West Pigeon water project will be resubmitted and significantly pared down. Clifton RD will be submitting proposals for more burning and thinning. Anne Casey reported on a habitat restoration to benefit deer, Gould's turkeys and bears on Mt Graham, with the assistance of National Wild Turkey Federation. The Coronado NF will submit a proposal this year for a follow-up burn.

**Next Meetings:**

The HPC funding coordination meeting between the Department and the wildlife conservation organization funding partners will be **January 11, 2014 from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM** in Phoenix.

The winter HPC meeting will be **February 1, 2014, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM**, also in Phoenix.